



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 5  
77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD  
CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

JUL 15 2015

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF:

WN-16J

Aaron Luckstein, Supervisor  
Southwest Regional Unit, Wastewater Section  
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
18 Wood Lake Drive SE  
Rochester, MN 55904

Re: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Review of Draft NPDES Permit, City of Hinckley  
Wastewater Treatment Facility, Hinckley, Minnesota, Permit No. MN0023701

Dear Mr. Luckstein:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Draft National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit for the City of Hinckley Wastewater Treatment Facility, Hinckley, Minnesota, MN0023701. This Draft Permit was submitted to EPA for review via email on June 26, 2015. This review focused specifically on one aspect of the permit, the proposed phosphorus effluent limitations. Based on our review of this particular component in the draft permit, EPA would not object to issuance of the permit. Our position could change if any of the following occur:

- 1) Prior to the actual date of issuance of a Proposed Permit, an effluent guideline or standard is promulgated which is applicable to the permit and which would require revision or modification of a limitation or condition set forth in the Draft Permit;
- 2) A variance is granted and the Permit is modified to incorporate the results of that variance;
- 3) There are additional revisions incorporated into the Permit which have not been agreed to by EPA; or
- 4) EPA learns of new information, including as the result of public comments, which causes EPA to reconsider its position.

Subject to the above conditions, the permit may be issued in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement and pursuant to the Clean Water Act.

Although we currently do not intend to object to the issuance of this permit, EPA requests that MPCA review and consider the points set out in Enclosure A. We believe these points are relevant to the Hinckley WWTF and potentially other point source discharges in the State.

When the Proposed Permit is prepared, please forward a copy and any significant comments received during any public notice period to [r5npdes@epa.gov](mailto:r5npdes@epa.gov). Please include the EPA permit number, the facility name, and the words "Proposed Permit" in the message title. If you have any questions related to EPA's review of this permit, please contact Bob Newport at (312) 886-1513 or at [newport.bob@epa.gov](mailto:newport.bob@epa.gov).

Thank you for your cooperation during the review process and your thoughtful consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Kevin M. Pierard, Chief  
NPDES Programs Branch

Enclosure

cc: Nicole Blasing, MPCA - Brainerd Office

# Enclosure A

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Draft NPDES Permit Received June 26, 2015  
City of Hinckley WWTF; NPDES Permit No. MN0023701

1. Currently available data indicate that the phosphorus criterion is being exceeded in the Grindstone River but data is not available to determine if the chlorophyll-a criterion is being met. Situations similar to this will likely be encountered in other water bodies in Minnesota where NPDES permits will be issued or reissued. MPCA staff have communicated to EPA the State's intent to conduct monitoring in the Kettle River watershed in 2015 and 2016, and that as part of that work data will be collected on phosphorus and chlorophyll-a in the Grindstone River. EPA appreciates MPCA's plan to collect additional information in this watershed. Gathering additional monitoring information during the permit term will be informative for confirming the appropriate water quality-based effluent limits when the permit is next reissued.

Based on other similar watersheds in northern Minnesota, and based on conditions in the Kettle River, it seems probable there is not a significant chlorophyll-a response in the Grindstone River. Nevertheless, the planned monitoring will provide data that will be useful for the next permit reissuance.

2. MPCA has evaluated the treatment components of the Hinckley WWTF with regard to the mass limits in the permit. At the time of permit issuance the facility is operating at less than the permitted average wet weather design flow (AWWF) and is demonstrating the capability of meeting the effluent mass limit of 942 kg/yr. Thus the facility will likely not be making major infrastructure improvements until such a time as flows approach the AWWF. It can reasonably be expected that situations like this will arise in other situations where limits are set reflecting AWWFs. EPA proposes that in such situations it seems warranted to require phosphorus reduction optimization – evaluating a range of measures for reducing phosphorus discharges from the treatment plant, including possible source reduction measures, operational improvements, and minor facility modifications that will optimize reductions in phosphorus discharges.

Under a separate cover, EPA will send to MPCA a listing of items that potentially should be considered in an optimization evaluation. It is our understanding that the Hinckley WWTF already has a fairly low phosphorus concentration in the influent and that the treatment processes include biological phosphorus removal. Some components of what might typically be included in a phosphorus optimization plan may be relatively less relevant for the Hinckley situation. What may be appropriate for the Hinckley permit could be a simplified phosphorus optimization requirement which would focus on continuing to implement measures to maintain good phosphorus performance, perhaps also with language that sets out if flows approach the AWWF a phosphorus treatment alternatives evaluation should be undertaken.